

**2008 Report on Act 65. Section 294
An Act Relating to Making Appropriations
for the Support of Government: Racially and
Ethnically Diverse Teachers; Recruitment
and Retention**

Report to the House and Senate Committees on Education

January 15, 2008

Submitted by:



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Section 294 of Act 65 directs the Commissioner of Education to consult with various parties regarding the recruitment of ethnically diverse teachers. The Commissioner has conducted meetings with people representing a variety of interests related to this topic. At the last meeting, the group recommended that the study described in the attached proposal, authored by Dr. Bud Myers of the University of Vermont, be undertaken. The initial contacts outlined in the study proposal are underway. The Department of Education will also be supporting a two-day mini-summit on the topic of recruiting ethnically diverse teachers. Both of these efforts will be responsive to the intent of Section 294.

**Teach for Diversity
Scholarship
Program/Vermont
Research Partnership
Study of Diversity of School
Personnel and Recruiting
Practices
Fall 2007
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

**Revised
January 16, 2008**

**Teach for Diversity Scholarship Program/Vermont Research Partnership
Study of Diversity of School Personnel and Recruiting Practices
Fall 2007
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TO: Interested persons
FR: Bud Meyers
RE: Q & A
DA: January 16, 2008

What's the problem we are addressing?

- As the Free Press so aptly pointed out to us (August 21, editorial) a more diverse teaching staff in our schools would benefit all children. Learning to live in a more culturally diverse world is part of the preparation needed by all students in order to be successful at work as well as comfortable with their neighbors. In fact, not to have a diverse teaching workforce is to deny all students of the opportunities to learn about themselves and other cultures. Many Vermont students will leave Vermont and find education and employment in areas of the country and world that are far more diverse than our state. Most will not have related to a person of color in a position of authority until they find themselves in the new environment. It is hard to imagine that any citizen or school board or superintendent who cares about the future of our communities and our state would deny our students these opportunities.
- At the same time certain areas of Vermont are rapidly becoming more and more diverse. In-migration from urban areas of the nation and foreign lands, post 9/11, has brought new faces, new languages and new opportunities in Winooski, Burlington, Brattleboro, Springfield and Rutland, to name a few communities. Without a concerted effort to find and retain teachers who are more like the students who are arriving many of these students will never see a person like themselves in a position of authority in their schools.
- Attracting and keeping talented people with diverse cultural backgrounds to work in our schools is not easy. The fact that many school districts have tried to recruit these talented individuals with very limited success tells us that probably no one method will produce the results requested by the parents who confronted school administrators in Burlington recently. It seems likely that doing what we have always done to attract diverse teachers and expecting a different result will only serve to maintain the status quo.

How big is this problem?

One answer to this question is that we really don't know how many teachers and administrators with diverse cultural backgrounds are currently working in Vermont schools. No one that we have talked with thus far believes that there are very many teachers who would either self identify as a person with a diverse cultural background or be identified by existing data.

Another answer to this question is to consult the US Census and Department of Labor statistics. What we have been able to glean from these sources is:

- In the 2000 US Census there were 261 teachers of color in Vermont.
 - African-American 32
 - Native American 47
 - Asian 17
 - Hispanic-Latino 77
 - Other Non-White 88
- In the 2000 US Census there were 13,138 education professionals (not including paraprofessionals)
- In the year 2000 there were about 100,000 students in Vermont schools.
- The ratio of white to non-white education professionals is 98%:2%
- The ratio of white to non-white in the general population is 96%:4%
- The chance of a student of color being in a classroom with a teacher of color is about 1 in 100.
- The chance of any student being in a classroom with a teacher of color is about 1 in 50.

What are some of factors that contribute to this problem?

An 'obvious fact' seems to be that Vermont is and has historically been a very homogeneous culture. Various cultures that have historically existed have remained largely hidden from view and the assumption of a predominate white culture has been taken for granted as the institutions were designed and built, languages taught and cultures noted, if not celebrated. Limited opportunities for employment of a population of approximately 670,000, housing in relatively short supply, transportation systems that are mainly suited to rural and suburban settings and cultural institutions that largely reflect a homogeneous culture provide little attraction to support in-migration of professionals.

Factors that attract individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds to employment and resettlement are not well understood. We often assume that they are the same factors that attract highly qualified persons from the dominant groups.

What do we know about how this problem might be solved?

High salaries, positive work environment, positive image of the school district and community, opportunities for further education and advancement, job security are all factors which tend to motivate highly qualified people to seek employment. Research on factors that augment the former list and may make the difference between recruitment success and failure is scant, but now beginning to emerge. (Thomas and Wise, 1999)

Characteristics of schools and communities that demonstrate:

- a commitment to diversity,
- a welcoming environment for members of diverse groups,
- an affirmative action policy,
- a demographic composition that demonstrates that the commitment has begun to effect change,
- a positive attitude supporting diversity by the recruiter,
- competent recruiters,
- compatible recruiter race and recruiter gender

.....may be important factors in the ‘diversity equation.’

How might we begin to solve this problem?

No one strategy to attract and retain teachers and administrators will be sufficient to show the results that are needed.

- First, we need to know more about the scope and dimensions of the current state of the workforce with respect to diversity. We propose a study (see below) to determine a baseline of data and practices.

Second,

- We probably need to support graduates of our schools who represent diversity and encourage them to stay in Vermont and teach. This is the approach taken by the Vermont Teacher Diversity Scholarship Program. Partnerships are needed between the program, school districts and colleges and universities to make this strategy work for Vermont.
- At the same time, we need to reach out to talented people who arrive in Vermont with support to encourage them to become teachers and administrators. The partnerships among the partners listed above could support this strategy as well. Special attention to the needs of diverse teachers with respect to navigating the roads to licensure can be a joint venture among the Vermont SDE, school districts and the teacher education programs in higher education.
- There are several strategies that emerge from the literature on how to recruit diverse professionals in business and industry. For example:
 - Restructuring and revising school websites and application materials such as School Spring to be more diversity sensitive with respect to the factors listed in the Thomas and Wise study

- Publishing current levels of diversity in the workforce, statewide and district level
- Setting goals for recruiting that identify at least five year benchmarks.

What is our proposal for a study?

We think that there are several questions to try to answer:

What are:

- Levels of diversity in existing staffing of Vermont Education among Vermont school districts?
- Attitudes among stakeholders concerning the desirability of recruiting a diverse workforce?
- Policy and practices currently being used to recruit a diverse workforce?
- Strategies being considered by schools to recruit diverse applicants?
- Views of the schools presented to prospective candidates (websites, recruiting materials)?
- What are the barriers to recruitment and hiring? How can the effects of the barriers be reduced?

What might result from the study?

- A report jointly issued by the partners that describes the scope of the issues and recommendations for schools, communities, higher education and state government
- Dissemination of baseline information about diversity in the education workforce to the public
- More conversation and problem solving about how to improve schools and communities.

How long should the study take?

If we begin now to plan the study a timeline might look like the following:

- November-December '07 – Dialogue among potential partners in the study to define the problem and get agreement on the questions to be asked and test the feasibility of the study design:
 - VSA
 - VSBA
 - SDE
 - Research Partnership
 - VTNEA
 - VPA
 - VTFDSP (Vermont Teach for Diversity Scholarship Program)
 - VSAC
- January-February – Data collection and writing the report
- March-April –Discussion of the findings among the partners

- May, 2008 – Final Report.

What are the methods by which we might get the information we need?

- Perseus or Survey Monkey – Online survey at UVM
- Review of school district websites for content variations (no districts named directly)
- Phone interviews with random sample of:
 - Superintendents,
 - Board Chairs,
 - School Spring staff,
 - Personnel directors,
 - SDE staff,
 - Diverse teachers currently teaching
 - Others?

What will the study cost?

We anticipate that the study will be a voluntary effort of the Vermont Research Partnership with UVM faculty and graduate students.

What will the partners provide?

- Participation in the dialogue on study questions, design and findings
- Support by encouraging members to participate in the survey as needed.

Reference:

Thomas, K. & Wise, P. (1999) Organizational Attractiveness and Individual Differences: Are Diverse Applicants Attracted by Different Factors? *Journal of Business and Psychology*. Volume 13, 3: 375-390.